

CONSIDERATIONS

ON THE

PRESENT STATE

OF THE

NATION,

AS TO

Publick Credit, Stocks, the
Landed and Trading Interests.

WITH

A PROPOSAL for the speedy lessening
the PUBLICK DEBTS, and restoring
CREDIT, in a manner consistent with
Parliamentary Engagements.



L O N D O N:

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CONSIDERATIONS

ON THE

PRESIDENT STATE

OF THE

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AND

Publick Credit

and the

WITNESSES

ATTESTED

THE PUBLIC DEBT

OF THE UNITED STATES

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Printed for J. Roberts in New York, and
A. D. 1790.

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PREFACE.

THESE small Performances (now so much in fashion) stand in as much need of a Preface as the voluminous Writings of our Ancestors did. The Face of Political Affairs is so continually changing, that what was very proper in the writing, may cease to be so before it is publish'd; and if any thing of that sort happen, the Author may correct it, or make an Apology for it in the Preface, which our modern Printers have, for that and many other good Reasons, reserv'd for the last part of their Toil.

While publick and national Affairs are in suspense, it is justly accounted the Duty, as well as the Privilege of the Good People of England, to offer, with Modesty, their Reasons, and propose what they conceive to be for the publick Benefit.

But when those entrusted with the Administration of publick Affairs, have discover'd their Sentiments, and their Counsels are known; it then becomes every private Man to be very prudent and reserv'd in opposing what he has reason to think those whose proper Business it is, have contriv'd. This Regard is both in Reason and Good Breeding due to those in Power, at least while it appears they design acting for the publick Good. When the Supreme Power have settled any publick Affair, it is the Duty of every Subject to acquiesce, with a respectful Silence. Whatever Opinion he may have of the Wisdom of their Determination, it is Insolence and Breach of his Allegiance, boldly to attack or confute the Wisdom of the Nation.

The Subject of these Sheets is certainly of great Importance to the Happiness of England. The several Matters treated of must receive a Determination this Session of Parliament. I have presumed to offer my Sentiments and Reasons upon this great Subject; and I hope, for the Matter and Manner of delivering them, they will not stand in much need of Apology. I can truly say, that my Intention was to promote the true Interest and Welfare of my Country, to the best of my Ability; and that if I am mistaken in it, it is not a wilful Mistake. I will give place to none of my Fellow-Subjects for Loyalty and Affection to his MAJESTY, and a due Esteem and Respect for those intrusted with the Administration; and if any thing I have said may be charg'd, by some hot and

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I know it is the Desire of some who have been acting both a foolish and wicked Part, that the People should be kept in the dark, as to their true Interests, which the more they understand, the better will they discern how criminal their Deluders have been. I have as much as possible avoided bitter Expressions and Accusations, as I am in a private Station: it was not my Business to say what might, with the greatest Reason, have been said by those, whose Province it is to correct enormous Offences.

What I have offer'd with regard to our Trade, and the Damage it must suffer, by turning all the Riches of the Nation into other Channels, is no more than what every one now sees as well as myself. If one may believe Report (which has indeed of late been but a weak Authority) our Statesmen are so sensible of this Part of the Evil, that in the new modelling of the South-Sea, a particular Regard will be had to this Mischief, and the further Payments on Subscriptions stop'd, that the rest of the Kingdom may not be drain'd every Year of many Millions by those immense Payments. If, according to the Proverb, One may judge of Hercules by his Foot, we have great Reason from this Instance to hope for a wise and just Regulation of our Affairs, and that Stockjobbing will not be preferr'd to our Trade and Manufactures.

tures. I hope what I have said on those Subjects will be so far from doing mischief, that it will contribute somewhat towards making People sensible of the Justice and Reason of those Regulations, that by their Superiors are intended for their real Advantage, and will in the End prove so, tho they may not gratify their present Desires.

I have purposely avoided entering into Particulars, as to a Regulation of the South-Sea Scheme, that is the Business of greater and abler Heads. I shall only take the Liberty of humbly proposing some Principles, that to me appear true; and, tho general and abstract, may not perhaps be useless in the Consideration of this Affair.

1. That in a Project, which in general is prejudicial to the Publick, and therefore requires Regulation; the several Proprietors are, however, entitled to mutual Justice with respect to one another, as far as is consistent with the Publick Interest. Robbers and Banditti owe mutual Justice to one another, even in those Matters that subject them all to Punishment from the Magistrate; much more those who have been acting under the Colour of Laws.

2. That those who in such a Scheme have contracted to be the highest Purchasers, should in the Regulation of it, continue to be so, and not be put in a better Condition than those who had contracted at a lower Price.

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3. That if any Body of Men insist they are not bound by a Contract they are suppos'd to have enter'd into, that they be not absolutely obliged to stand to such supposed Contract, but be at liberty to try their Right according to the Laws, upon Condition that if it be found against them, they stand to their Contract as it was made, and be entitled to no Favour, when they insist on strict Justice; but if they submit to Publick Award, that reasonable Favour and Indulgence be shewn them.

4. That as to Contracts between private Men, where they are vastly numerous, and may be very ruinous and oppressive; they be as far as possible settled by one Rule, and be determined by the supreme Authority according to Justice and Equity, and not left to be settled by endless and infinite Law-Suits, and by Laws neither intended for, nor adapted to such Cases.

5. That a Set of Men, who are not a hundredth Part in Number, nor a tenth Part in Value of the People of England, are not the Nation, tho they pretend to be so.

6. That in every Point where the Interest of the Whole comes in competition with the Interest of a Part of the Nation, the Interest of the Whole, as far as is consistent with Publick Faith, be preferr'd to the Interest of such Part.

That

That the Reader may not from any thing I have said conjecture that I am for having Stock at a very low Price, I take this Opportunity to inform him, that South-Sea was about Two Hundred and Fifty when these Sheets were written, and that it is for my private Interest that it should come to a much better Price to prevent my being a Loser. That I have no Contract to perform, or to be performed to me, I would not mention such Particulars, did I not find that every one is apt to suppose private Interest at the Bottom of every Proposal.



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CONSIDERATIONS
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IT is but a few Weeks past that whoever had taken the liberty to talk rationally of the State of the Nation, to warn his Countrymen of the sudden Destruction that was coming upon them, would have been laughed at as a whimsical odd Fellow, or contemned as a poor Wretch, who having nothing to hazard in the Lottery, envied the Prosperity of the lucky Adventurers. The greatest Patriots, Men whose Honour and Wisdom had entitl'd them to the highest Regard, who with the strongest Reason and most lively Eloquence endeavour'd to save their
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Country from Ruin, might as well have made Speeches to Stocks and Stones as to those that heard them. The Frenzy rose so high, that even Mathematical Demonstrations (of which this Subject was always capable) were slighted, and the Authors of them treated as if they had been Quacks or Ballad-Singers.

The times being now so much alter'd, it is to be hoped that Reason will be heard. Men in miserable Circumstances are generally ready enough to hear any thing that may tend to relieve them. A Rake who has lived a mad profligate Life, will on a Sick-Bed send for the Parson, and lay hold on any Twig, tho ever so slight or fallacious, in hopes to save himself. One may already perceive that a multitude of Schemes are thought of for redressing the Evil, and many more no doubt will daily be proposed, and readily approved by one or other; but this general *Criterion* will be proper to apply to them, that they be not calculated for the Service of one Set of Men, to the Ruin of another. In a National Concern every one ought to bear part of the Burden, and every one either at present or hereafter have a proportionable Benefit. Before one can hope to find a proper Remedy, it's necessary to know the Disease, which I find is very much mistaken by many. A Proprietor in Stock, who has bought at the highest Price, imagines that if it is not raised so that he may have his Money again, nothing is done; that the Welfare of the Nation depends on his being saved harmless: when perhaps

perhaps his Vice and Folly may deserve no more Compassion, were the Motives of his Conduct known, than the Distress of one who loses his Estate at the *Groom-Porter's*. A Farmer or Country Squire, who finds his Corn does not sell, or his Rents come in readily, takes the Disease to be these very Funds on which the Citizens and Courtiers live; and the Remedy, he imagines, for his Sufferings, is abating or annulling Land-Tax and Malt-Tax, and spunging the Publick Debt. If one comes into the Company of Proprietors of the *South-Sea*, the third and fourth Subscribers have one Scheme, the Proprietors of the Redeemable Funds another, the Proprietors of the Original Stock a third, each of them calculated for their own particular Advantage, to the Damage of their Neighbours, tho they are all embarked in the same Bottom, and if every one scrambles for himself, they may all be greater Losers. The Disease I take to be, not only a falling of the Price of Stocks: those able Jobbers who first blew them up like a Bladder, would perhaps be able soon to do the same again, were other Parts of the Publick in a safe and prosperous Condition. This alone is so far from being a Calamity to the Nation in general, that it is much better to have them even at the present Price, than at what they were two or three Months ago.

What I reckon the Evil, which affects the Nation in general, is the Decay and Loss of private Credit; which is absolutely necessary to

carry on Commerce, to prevent the Nation's losing Millions every Year, to support the Government, to pay the Proprietor of the Funds his Interest, the Landed-Man his Rent, to set the Manufacturer at work, and clothe and feed the Poor. The loss of this Credit has in some measure been the effect of our late glorious Projects: tho I cannot but think it more owing to two or three wrong Steps in the Management of some wise Heads, who were to support Stock, than to any necessary Connection between the Price of Stock, and the Credit between Man and Man. We have seen the Pretender in *Scotland*, a Run upon the Bank, and yet a Merchant has had Credit on his Goods, and on his Bills, which now he cannot have. We have in a few Weeks seen two Parts in three of that Credit, which is real Riches to a Nation while it is kept up, destroy'd. How long it will be before it is restored, no one can tell; but I fear it will require Years to set us in this respect where we were this time Twelve-month. It is however certain, that till it is in some measure restored, Commerce, either buying or selling any thing but daily Food, must be at a dead stand; Goods neither imported nor exported, no one knowing what to do with them, nor where or in whose Hands to trust them; the Manufacturer so far from having encouragement to make new Goods, that he cannot depend upon being paid for those already sold, and consequently has neither Money to pay Arrears of Wages to his under

under Work-men, nor the least Spirit, had he Ability, to set them at work a-new. The poor Underling Wretches employ'd in Manufactures, whose Nature is always to live from Hand to Mouth, cannot starve; they must either come upon the Poor's Rate, or when that will not do, as in many places it will not where they are very numerous, must steal, pilfer or plunder, for *Necessity has no Law*. The Farmer, instead of selling the Produce of his Lands, may have it taken from him by Force, or, which is not much better for him, have all the Profits of his Labours swallowed up by an immense Poor's Rate; his Landlord can then hope for no Rent, and must become desperate. But I shall say no more, every one may easily imagine the Train of inexpressible Evils that must follow. I hope the Case will not prove near so bad; but there can be no harm in foreseeing and providing against possible Dangers, much more probable ones.

Tho *England* has been Profuse, Vain, and Extravagant enough in times of Prosperity, yet when a time of extreme Danger comes, I think the Sparks of our antient Generosity, Wisdom and Virtue, will revive, and we shall not want Men that will, with a disinterested Vigour, and true Love to their Country, attempt the saving us from Ruin. That the Nature and Causes of our present Distress may be better understood, which is necessary to find out the Cure, and make Men willing to bear it, I shall go back to the Original of the Evil,

Evil, and endeavour to shew the Steps by which it has work'd to bring us to this pass; and I hope the Story will not be impertinent.

The Deliverance at the glorious Revolution brought with it the greatest Blessings to the Nation. The Security and Liberty which the People then had, made them industrious, and our Trade flourish'd to a greater degree than it had done for many Years before, and increas'd our Riches every day. This is the natural Effect of Liberty, even when it is but imaginary. An instance of this we have under the Usurpation of *Oliver Cromwel*. The People who had felt the insupportable Load of *Ecclesiastical Tyranny*, (not to mention any other) thought themselves free even under *Oliver's* Despotick Government. The Nation grew Rich and Powerful in the Year 1655, and onwards. We drove a Trade vastly more great and beneficial to the Nation, than had ever been known before. The Security and Liberty at the Revolution was not imaginary, but real; and the Effects of it would have laid the Foundation of being the richest as well as the freest People in the Universe. The War which followed upon it put us under a necessity of defending our late acquired Happiness by the Sword, and Taxes were necessary to be raised; had they been twice as great as they then were, they would have been no more than a just Acknowledgment to our great Deliverer, and Money wisely spent, which would have sooner sav'd us then, and prevented the Evils we now
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feel. That great Prince King *William*, who desir'd nothing more than to see the Nation settled on a firm Foundation, propos'd himself the raising the necessary Supplies within the Year by a moderate Land-Tax and Excises, which our Neighbours had practis'd with Success, and which are certainly the safest and easiest Tax that can be levy'd, and the least Prejudice to Trade. There were a Set of Men then, some of whom are still living, who tho Friends to the Revolution, soon turned Enemies to the Author of it; they oppos'd this Method of raising Taxes within the Year, insisted that the Government was weak, as being newly settled, and that the People would not bear to pay a Tax for every Morsel of Bread they put into their Mouths. They propos'd raising the Supplies by a small Fund to be mortgaged, which the People would not feel, and the zealous Friends to the Government would advance Money on; and those who should ever become Proprietors of this Debt, would by Interest be attached to the Protestant Government. These Reasons, tho specious enough, that great Prince saw thro: He knew the mighty Power of *France*, which these Advisers pretended to slight and contemn: He knew the Difficulties he should fall under in raising new Funds for every Campaign, and pity'd the Case of Posterity, who, by this fallacious way of raising Money, would be mortgaged to Excess, to pay not only the necessary Charges of defending their Liberties, but to answer all
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the Sums that the ill Management or Misapplication of those intrusted should add. But it was in vain to stem the Tide, and he was forced to submit. This Step is the great Foundation of our present Calamity. I need not mention how it went on, till at last we are come to pay more annual Interest to the Proprietors of the publick Debt, than the annual Charges of King *William's* Campaigns amounted to ; and must besides raise two or three Millions more for the necessary Support of the Government, and the current Service. The Land-Tax, which ought always to be accounted the sure and steady Support of the Government, in such a Country as ours, where it is so vast a Revenue, was managed in the same impolitick way. People were left to tax themselves : the Friends to the Government did it honestly and generously ; others valued their Estates as low as they did the National Happiness ; and, could they have avoided it, would have paid nothing. This Method of a Tax is a shame to a well regulated State ; and this every one must own who is impartial, tho he is a great Gainer by it, as I myself am ; tho I wish to see it remedied. I need not repeat the several Steps that were taken in raising Money by this way of Loans every Year, till the Publick Debts amounted to the vast Sum of fifty Millions and upwards.

I shall only mention some few of the miserable Consequences of this wrong Step. King *William* had Funds given him, upon which it was almost impossible to raise Money necessary to
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bring the Troops into the Field, and he could not do that till the Months of *July* and *August*. He was forced to borrow Money at a vast Discount, which necessitated the Publick to raise greater Supplies afterwards. Private Men continually made Advantages of the Publick; and some cunning Men, who bought the publick Securities at an under Rate, always sold them at a vast advanced Price; and the Damage done to the Publick, was the raising of their private Fortunes.

In the late War, the Debt was grown so great, and the current Services so pressing, that we were obliged to postpone all home Payments, and turn all the Money to the Service abroad: so that at the conclusion of the last Peace, the Debt of the Navy, and some few other Articles, amounted to near Nine Millions; to secure the payment whereof the *South-Sea* Company was erected. It is plain, that *England* might have born the same Taxes soon after the Revolution that they now pay; and less than these would from time to time have, under tolerable Management, born all the Charges of our two Wars. In some part of the last War, I believe, it was necessary to borrow Money by way of Mortgage. When the *French* had, upon the foot of publick Credit, borrowed vast Sums; had we not done the like, we could not for two or three Campaigns have stood our Ground; and consequently it was reasonable at that time, when we were under a necessity of expending

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Six or Seven Millions annually, to charge Posterity with some part of the Burden of defending their Liberties. But this would have amounted but to a very few Millions. The Bulk of our Debt has been contracted by neglecting to pay those annual Taxes, which we might have done. We have been for these twenty Years in the Case of an extravagant Heir to a great Estate. We have mortgag'd ourselves every Year more and more, and have made a brave Figure in the World; but when we come to make up our Accounts, find we have greatly lessen'd, if not near exhausted the Inheritance.

I know it is generally said, that a Debt due from one Subject of *England* to another, is no loss to the Nation, and that the publick Debts are of that sort. I agree this is very true as to private Mens dealing with one another. If a Landed or Money'd Man is extravagant, the industrious Trader who supplies him with the Marerials for his Vanity, is much fitter to enjoy his Estate than the former Owner. But this is not the Case of a National Debt. The true Parallel is this: If a private Man runs in debt past possibility of paying, he is ruin'd, and must be impotent and miserable. In the same manner, if the State is in debt to a greater degree than can be answer'd, it must be weak and poor, incapable of doing any great Actions, even of defending itself against foreign Enemy. All the difference between the private Man and the State is this, the private

private Man may be ruin'd, and all his Property seiz'd, the State cannot be in this Condition.

✓The supreme Power in every Country is absolute; and the Maxim, *Salus Populi Suprema Lex*, is not only a Maxim of Policy, but strict Morality. A State cannot nor will not be ruin'd as a private Man. The publick Welfare, by our present Laws, justifies burning Corn and destroying Houses in case of a foreign Invasion, and blowing up one's Neighbour's House in case of a Fire, let the Damage be ever so great to the Owner. It is indeed a Security, that a free State and a well order'd Government will never proceed to such Extremities but in the utmost and unavoidable Necessity; whereas an arbitrary Government will pretend Necessity where there is none. We have the Happiness to live under the best, I may say the only free Government in the Universe. Our supreme Power is in part lodg'd in our Representatives, who are to be reckon'd as our selves; and consequently we are secure of all the Care and Indulgence imaginable to our Liberty and Property: but it is as much Wickedness as Folly to desire or hope that our particular Interests should be prefer'd to that of the Publick, in Cases of Extremity. Nothing will justify abridging any Man in his Liberty or Property, but an apparent Danger of entire Ruin to both: and to be tender of them in cases of Extremity, is indeed to give

them up, and expose them to irretrievable Ruin.

It is to little purpose to look back to all past Mismanagements, by which the immense Debt we now owe has been contracted; at least one third of it may justly be laid to Carelessness of the Managers, and the Impositions of a small number of Men, who had as it were the Monopoly of Money; and much the greatest part of the whole Debt is owing to that false Step of mortgaging before there was an absolute Necessity, which perhaps at the latter end of the last War there was, as far as Ten or Twelve Millions went. What the present Generation has to consider, is the effect of this Debt upon our Trade, and the publick Safety; and the Methods of retrieving the Damage that has already been done to both; and preventing those Dangers that may hereafter ensue, if not taken care of immediately. I shall mention those Mischiefs which I apprehend to be the most considerable.

i. The vast quantity of Money and Credit necessary to circulate our publick Stocks, leaves no room for applying any considerable Sums in the other parts of our home and foreign Commerce. This Mischiefe has been for many Years past in some degree apparent, but is now undeniably evident to every one. Had the *South-Sea* Stock kept up at the Price the Proprietors talk'd of, that is, at least at a Thousand, there must have been the Value of Four Hundred Millions of publick Stocks, of
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one kind and another. Supposing these could have been circulated by a tenth part of the Value in Specie-Credit, that would have amounted to Forty Millions. To support and circulate this Specie-Credit would have requir'd at least Ten Millions of Money, which is as much as any one, I believe, can conceive to be commanded by the Bank, the Goldsmiths, and other Dealers in Credit in *London*: and this would have left but barely what was necessary to go to Market, and pay Taxes and Rent in the Country; so that it would have been impossible to have found any Fund of Money or Credit sufficient to carry on foreign or inland Commerce to any degree. Those who understood the Nature of Credit, and were able to make the justest Calculations, have generally agreed, that all the Specie of *Europe* would not have been sufficient to have bought and sold our Stocks, and made the Payments of Subscriptions; which last Article amounted to Seventeen millions annually, as the Scheme stood on taking in the fourth Subscription. The Case is now alter'd, and as to the Publick much for the better, however ruinous it has been to the real Property, or imaginary Riches of private Persons. But I fear it will still appear to be too great a Weight for *England* to bear without proper Regulations. The Stocks indeed are greatly diminish'd as to their Price; but then the Credit, necessary to circulate them, is diminish'd, at least as much in proportion. I shall put nothing

thing to the Account of Money lost by Foreigners selling our: I believe that has not lost the Nation much Money, and is ballanc'd fully by what Foreigners have bought at a high Price. But the Article of much greater Importance, is the loss of all our Paper Credit, except that of the Bank. I cannot but think this amounts to two Parts in three of our Specie-Bills, which when in repute did answer all the Purposes of so much Money, both in buying Stocks, and Goods and Merchandizes. The means by which this fatal Calamity has fallen upon us, I shall take the liberty to mention, without reflecting on the Conduct of any Set of men, who perhaps have Reasons to alledge that will justify them, tho I cannot in my poor Capacity think of any.

The *South-Sea* Stock falling to an unexpected degree, made it thought necessary for that Company to call for Help from the Bank, who had acquir'd, and indeed with great Reason, the highest Credit and Reputation. The very Name of the Bank, without any other Assistance, was certainly a vast help to a Company that had been acting on a wild and unaccountable Scheme. The Bank agreed, considering the imminent Danger the whole publick Credit, and consequently their own, was in, to assist the *South-Sea* Company with all the Weight of their Reputation for Honesty and Dexterity, in both which good Qualities the Managers of the *South-Sea* have by some been thought greatly defective. They did not only

do this, but propos'd to help them to Money, as well as give Reputation to them. They agreed to take *Three Millions Seven Hundred Thousand Pounds*, due to them from the Publick, in *South-Sea Stock*; and likewise to raise, by way of Subscription, *Three Millions* for circulating the *South-Sea Bonds, &c.* It was but reasonable, in this case, that the *Sword-Blade Partners*, who had been the chief Bankers to the *South-Sea Company*, should cease to be so for the future: it was not fit they should have the Profit, while the Bank had the Burden of supporting the Scheme. The *South-Sea* agreed to this Separation; but had they let their old Friends drop more gently, a certain worthy Citizen would have had more reason to extol their *Humanity*, than he had for that Compliment in a late general Court, upon an Occasion that some think did not deserve it. The effect of this Union was the Ruin of the *Sword-Blade Credit*. Their Customers, who found they were to be abandon'd, began to think their Money in danger; and the Bank Subscriptions calling for large Sums of Money, necessitated those who had Money in the *Sword-Blade*, to call for it to pay into the Bank; especially those who were Proprietors of the *South-Sea*, who generally kept their Cash in the *Sword-Blade*, and who (it is to be presum'd) were the greatest Subscribers to the Bank, it being for circulating and raising their own Stock. The Croud, and consequently the Demand this made on the *Sword-Blade Bankers*, overwhelm'd them.

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They apply'd for Help where they thought it could be only had, but in vain. Whether they could with Safety to the Publick have been supported, I will not take upon me to say. The Persons concern'd were certainly Men of great Estates, of great Reputation, and had Effects to pawn vastly more valuable than all the Money they paid out. But in relation to the Publick, I cannot but think that a Million of Money would have been well employ'd in helping these Gentlemen to stand. Tho I had never any Dealings with them, and consequently have lost nothing by them, I would willingly have born my share of a National Tax towards supporting them. It was plain at that time that a Storm was coming; and if it broke thro any of our Banks, a general Inundation would follow. This is as much the case of Political Defences as Natural. A Breach of a few Feet wide, if not repair'd, will let in the Ocean; and those who will not lend their helping Hand to stop it, will soon find their good Husbandry much mistaken, and that they are, as the Proverb says, *Pennywise and Pound foolish*. That this has been our case, is plain. Immediately on the stopping of the *Sword-Blade*, the Infection spread like the Pestilence. Every body began to fear their Paper would not prove real Money, when they wanted it. Seeing those who had the best Reputation failed, they run on the Bankers, many of whom were immediately blown up, and those some of them thought past all possibility of Danger.

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Even the *Bank of England*, which has been to us like the *Capitol* to old *Rome*, was storm'd; but by good Fortune were able to repulse the Enemy. Our Merchants, whose Cash chiefly lay in the Bankers Hands, and was there lost, could not pay the foreign Bills drawn on them, which thereupon went back protested. The Foreigners finding their Bills not paid here, refused to pay those drawn from *England* on them; and so it has gone round, till an universal Stop is put to that Credit which circulated our Commerce; and every Note and Bill, except those of the *Bank*, and some few others, is now become as mere a piece of waste Paper, as if a *Prayer* or a *Creed* was writ on it instead of Money. When we shall see an end of this Mischiefe, I know not; but one may observe, that hitherto it has ebb'd and flow'd like the Tide; one Post in *Holland*, and the next back again in *England*. Every considerable Man that stops Payment, draws a multitude after him: and, considering the Men that have fail'd, one can hope for no body's standing, who have ever had Credit enough in Commerce to draw and answer Bills to any Value.

I doubt not, many have of late stopt Payment, who, when their Affairs come to be look'd into, will appear to have Effects vastly more than sufficient to answer all their Debts. The present Stoppage, tho it is a great Surprise to many, is the natural Effect of a great Credit. When it is in flourishing Circumstances,

a very little Money circulates immense Sums in Bills; but when a general Distrust spreads amongst the Dealers, it is quite the contrary; and there is not so much paid or circulated, as even the Money itself would answer without Bills. A Merchant, for instance, in *London*, who has Two Thousand Pounds Effects in the Hands of a Foreigner, who has a Thousand Pound Effects in the *London-Merchant's* Hands; if the Foreigner draws on the *London-Merchant*, he will not pay the Thousand Pound Bills, because he fears the Foreigner will break with his Two Thousand Pounds in his Hands, and then he will have paid the Thousand Pound clear, and may only come in for a Composition for his Two Thousand Pound, perhaps after the rate of Five Shillings in the Pound. The Foreigner finding his Bill is not paid here, refuses, in like manner, to answer the Bills drawn from hence; and so both Merchants stop Payment, tho both perhaps are able to pay. This has been very much the case of late, and no one at this time knows whom to trust for a Remittance of Money, or Goods. It's impossible to remedy this Evil, while one Merchant goes off after another. Traders are so link'd with one another, that unless a Man knew his Correspondent's Affairs better than perhaps he does his own, he could not know how to venture upon dealing with him. This Affair must have an end soon, tho it should spread ever so universally; and when the Bankrupeys are over, and the several Accounts

made

made up, I dare say it will appear that many of those who have stopt Payment, are not insolvent, but able to pay even double what they owe. What shall we then think of Schemes and Projects, that by their mischievous Consequences are able to break the best of our Merchants, at a time when they are worth a great deal more than all they owe? The case of Home-Credit and Circulation is the same, and is indeed a necessary Consequence of the other. There is not a Market-Town in *England* but has felt it already, and will feel it yet more. The Inland-Traders are so far from taking the Bills they usually did, that they are even frightened at the sight of a Bank Note. Credit has been working up ever since the Revolution, and was this Year got to a vast height. It is now fallen on a sudden, and we are at present much where we were a hundred Years ago. It must require a great length of Time to restore it again, and some part of it I think can never be restored to any great degree, especially that of the Bankers, which made a large Article. I shall conclude this Remark, with observing, That the loss of this Credit is the loss of so much Riches to the Nation; for the Circulation of Bills, whilst in Reputation, answers all the Purposes of Money both for buying Stocks and Merchandizes. The Money of the Nation cannot circulate a quarter part of our Dealings, and the other three quarters are now in a great measure stopt. It will, when these things are consider'd, be

no wonder to any one, to see Stocks, and every thing else, at a low Price: they cannot bear a high one till there is more Credit to pay for them; which I wish may be soon, tho I cannot find Reasons to expect it, unless some vigorous Steps be taken immediately.

2. A second Mischief to the Publick, consequent on our late Schemes, is raising Interest to an exorbitant height. This is a necessary Consequence of the vast advanc'd Price of the Stocks. Money always is valuable according to the Demand and Use there is for it. If the Uses and Demand are doubled, and the Money not increased, it will be of course twice as valuable; if the Money be decreased half in half, it will be four times as valuable. Money is but a Commodity, and as really rises or falls in its Value, according to its Plenty or Scarcity, greatness or smallness of the Demand for it; as Land, Corn, or any other vendible thing. What made us easy till of late, was the vast quantity of Paper-Credit; which increasing as fast as the Prices of Stock did, and multiplying our Money five or six times over, and answering all the Purposes of Money, furnish'd People with Ability to buy and sell the vast quantities of Stocks: But as this Credit is in a great measure destroy'd, it's impossible for Men to find means to buy, tho the Gaming humour was as great as formerly. It is no Secret now, that Money is at least at the rate of *Twenty per Cent. per Annum*, and that some who are not *Jews*, but good *Churchmen*, have taken af-

ter

ter the rate of Sixty, and had good Security in their hands. This is the effect of putting Men under a necessity to borrow. A Man will sooner give any Interest than be immediately ruin'd; tho that Interest will certainly ruin him at last. The present Necessity, and hope of better Times, makes Men venture on any thing. This will be a lasting Evil, if the pernicious Method of Subscriptions, which the *South-Sea* Company have invented, be carry'd on. It is well known, that many who have these Subscriptions, have little or nothing else; they must keep their Payments, or else lose the Money already paid. This Money they must borrow; the Lender knows their Necessity, and thinks he acts a charitable Part if he takes no more than Five *per Cent.* for a Month; and the Borrower, having no other Effects to pawn but his Subscription-Receipt, is happy to meet with a Man that will lend him the Money on any terms. These annual Payments being for many Millions, will be such a Harvest for Usurers as never was before. It will require the ablest Heads to contrive a Remedy for this Abuse. It's well known, the present Laws are Cobwebs to *South-Sea* Contractors; and should the proper Remedies be apply'd, they would say all *Trade* (for by that honourable Name have they called *Stock-jobbing*) is ruin'd.

But the main mischief of high Interest is still to come, which is Ruin to the Exportation of our home Commodities and Manufactures.

This

This Trade is the Life and Soul of our Happiness, and raises real Riches to a Nation; when other things, that are esteemed Riches, are real Poverty. I shall not detain my Reader by long Proofs that a greatly advanc'd Interest is Ruin to our Manufactures. Sir *Josiah Child*, one of the wisest Men of his Age in these matters, as appears by the great Estate he got, has writ a whole Treatise on this Subject: wherein he proves, to a Demonstration, that those who can borrow Money at least Interest, must carry away the Trade from their Neighbours. His Book is in every hand, and will convince every impartial Reader, that his Principles are true. All I shall do is to apply those Principles to the present Case, and shew, that while our Stocks continue at a very high Price, and in proportion as they do so, in the same proportion must Interest rise, and Manufactures and the Exportation of them decay and lessen; which is so much dead loss of real Riches every Year.

No one will doubt, that the way in which most Money can be got, and the best Improvement of Money can be made, will have the preference to any other Method wherein less Improvement can be made. He that will now let out his Money to the Proprietors of the Funds, may depend on Fifteen *per Cent. per Annum*, and good Security; and if he be not very ignorant, may know how to avoid our present Laws. If the Borrower values the Stock at such a Rate as to induce him to give

such

such Interest; it's plain he takes it for granted
 he shall by Dividends, or Jobbing, or great
 Rise, or some other way, make more Profit
 than the Interest he pays amounts to. The
 current Interest propos'd in Dividends is al-
 ways more than legal Interest; and the humour
 the Bulk of Mankind have to Gaming, will
 make them prefer a Lottery on even disadvan-
 tageous Terms, to a real and undoubted Se-
 curity at *Five per Cent.* This is so visibly the
 humour of the Bulk of Mankind, that I need
 only appeal to every body's Eye-sight for the
 proof of it. This Humour has for the last
 Year been by some Men encourag'd, to a de-
 gree never known in wise Countrys. He that
 ran headlong to Destruction, was reckon'd a
 Lover of his Country. He that calculated the
 Chances of the Lottery, or discover'd the Art
 of the *Jugler's Cups and Balls*, was reckon'd an
 Enemy to Credit and the Peace of his Coun-
 try, a Fool, and an Enemy to himself. Will
 any one after this doubt of the Allurements of
 Gaming Projects, where a Man has the chance
 of doubling his Money every Year? and as e-
 very one depends on his own Skill in the Game,
 he doubts not he shall come off a winner, tho
 he knows others must be losers as much. If
 this be the Humour of Mankind, I say it is
 plain the Stocks will employ the whole Credit
 of the Nation, preferable to any other Employ
 that can be thought of. For in the Stocks the
 Proprietor reckons his Interest at *Twenty per*
Cent. at least; and the Usurer, who will run
 no

no Hazard, can really make Fifteen *per Cent.* of his Money in this Trade : so that if the Demand be great enough, all the Money and Credit will run this way. Now that it is great enough to employ near the whole of our Money and Credit, is apparent. Supposing *South-Sea* to be at Four Hundred, as is desir'd by many, our Stocks of all sorts would amount to near a Hundred and Fifty Millions the Purchase of them. Suppose they can be bought and sold with a tenth part of this Value in Specie-Notes, that amounts to Fifteen Millions of Credit, to be almost constantly employ'd in buying and selling them. You must allow at least as much more to be necessary for the other Purposes of the Nation, which cannot be avoided, as buying and selling Victuals, (for every body must eat) paying Rents, (or else Tenants and Landlords must starve) paying Taxes and Customs for imported Goods, (or else your whole Property must be seized) these are absolutely necessary Uses that will admit of nothing to come in competition with them, and must employ at least Fifteen Millions more; a great part of which, nay much the greatest, must be answer'd with real Coin, for Specie-Notes will answer none of these Purposes, except that of Customs. I believe, modestly speaking, two parts in three of the Coin of the Nation are employ'd, and must necessarily be so, in these Channels. Here are Thirty Millions of Specie and Credit employ'd, and more I think cannot be pretended to at this time, when

when so great a part of the Credit we had is gone, *viz.* that of Bankers, Merchants, Remitters, and Inland-Traders; how shall the Manufactures of *England* be carry'd on while things are at this pass? Those that deal in them have not vast Sums before-hand; if they had, they would not employ themselves in so hazardous and laborious a Business. One with another of the Manufacturers may be reasonably computed to drive three parts in four of his Business with Money borrow'd at Interest, or Credit for time, which is equivalent to paying Interest: and generally the difference between Ready-money and Time is double Interest. If *South-Sea* Interest be really vastly more than legal Interest, and, modestly speaking, may be computed at *Ten per Cent.* a Manufacturer must pay near that Premium to come at Money; nay, I think, for the Reasons given above, must pay rather more, and must have good Reputation to borrow at all: for the *South-Sea* Gamester can pawn the Government Debt, which is certainly a substantial Security, but the Trader can only pawn his Honesty and Reputation, which is now at a low ebb. If the Manufacturer must pay near *Ten per Cent.* one way or other, for his Money employ'd in Trade, the Merchant must pay, for the same Reasons, pretty near the same; and by that time Freight and other Charges are paid, and a moderate Profit allow'd to the Manufacturer and Merchant, these Goods must be sold abroad at *Thirty per Cent.* Profit; which

is an Absurdity, and never was, nor can be the Case of our Woollen Manufactures, or any other of our Staple Commodities. Foreigners neither can nor will pay such an advanced Price; and indeed can provide themselves at home; or from other Markets, much cheaper. These Causes must, if not prevented, soon put a stop to our Manufactures; the mischief of which is inexpressible, Two millions a Year dead Loss to the Nation, which will in a few Years consume our Vitals, and the Manufacturers and Workmen starv'd and thrown on the Poor's Rate; which will make numbers of People, who when employ'd are the greatest Riches and Blessing to a Nation, the greatest Curse that can be conceiv'd.

To this Decay that threatens our Trade of Exportation, I may add the Damage done by our Importation; which will be increasing as long as we have any Treasure to buy foreign Goods with. The little our Merchants now trade in, is chiefly of this kind. They are sure in the City of *London* to find Purchasers for any sort of foreign Productions that are more curious than our own Commodities; and the greater Rarities they are, the better they are accepted, and no Price can be named that will not be paid by some of our extravagant overgrown Rich Men, who have not scrupled to entertain commonly with *Tockay* of a Guinea a Bottle, and wear foreign Laces of a Hundred Pound Sterling a Neckcloth and Pair of Ruffles. What is common for all men that

reckon

reckon themselves Men of Fashion, is *French* Wine from Five to Seven Shillings a Bottle : which is not only an instance of a universal prevailing Luxury, but the most mischievous Expence to *England* that can be thought of ; it being either a Return for hard Money, or, which is worse, for our Raw Wool exported.

If every Gentleman that guzzles his two Flasks of *Hermitage*, *Burgundy*, or *Champaign* every day, (of which the number is very considerable) would but reflect that the natural consequence of pleasing his Palate to this degree may be the loss of a Week's Wages to a whole Family of industrious labouring People, I should think it would spoil the Gaiety of their Cups ; especially if they consider that a National Luxury, of which they are the Encouragers, will bring many, even of themselves, to Ruin, and to the miserable Condition of not being able to drink *Port*, which they now wittily call Liquor for Porters. The Increase of Importation of foreign Goods has been a plain consequence of our national Debt, and is the strongest Inducement in the world to endeavour, if possible, the speedy payment of it. Before our Funds were grown to such a Bulk, the only People that consum'd foreign Goods in any quantity were our Rich Merchants and City Traders, our Noblemen and Courtiers, and some few of the best of the Gentry ; the lesser Gentry and Commonalty spent no more in this way than what was absolutely necessary,

which was not much; and the whole was sufficiently balanced by our own exported Commodities. But when in the middle of the last War the Funds were so numerous as to be the Estates of a vast number of People that were new rais'd from small Beginnings, that were neither Tradesmen nor Gentlemen of any Rank before, this new Set of Gentry become more numerous than all the former; they liv'd easily on the National Interest, liv'd mostly about this Town, and have for some Years past consum'd more foreign Goods than all the People of *England* put together did before. There is hardly one of this new Set of Gentry, from Two Thousand Pound Fortune and upwards, that do not spend near half their Income in foreign Wines, Linens, Silks, Laces, Tea, Coffee, and an infinite number of other Curiosities. The increase of Importations by these means is vastly great; and if our Exportations are not put on such a foot as to balance them better than they do at present, I shall undervalue our Loss to say it is but Two Millions a Year.

The Custom-House Books will sufficiently demonstrate the vast Increase of Importations, which have rais'd the Income of the Customs prodigiously: but those Taxes might much better have been paid any other way; for where the Funds get one Shilling by it, the Nation loses two.

The last Mischief which has not yet befallen us, but is a just and natural Consequence of
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the Premises, is a National Decay and Poverty; an Impossibility of keeping up the Rents of our Land, and consequently of paying the publick Taxes, or discharging the national Debt with Honour and Justice. This Consequence has not yet taken place, and I hope it never will. Providence has still left it in our power, if we will but with Virtue and Diligence set about it, to retrieve our past Misconduct, and save a sinking Nation, which for its Constitution, Laws, Liberty, and Happiness, has been the Glory of the World. What I shall say under this Head, is not design'd to raise a *Pan-nick* Fear in my Countrymen; for while there is a Remedy, there is no occasion for that: But it's necessary Men in Danger should be awaken'd out of a dead and secure Sleep, that they may take care of themselves. And he that honestly does this, will not surely, while any Goodness is left, be look'd on as an Enemy.

I say then, That the natural Consequence of what has been before-mention'd, *viz.* The vast quantity of Money necessarily employ'd in circulating our bulky Stocks, the want of Money to employ in our Manufactures, the Increase of our Importations, and the Diminution of our Exportations; these, I say, join'd with a general loss of Credit, must consume and waste our Riches by very quick degrees. When we have less Treasure, less Coin, less Credit every day than other, the Price of every thing must be lessen'd. Money being the Standard

Standard of all our Property, if that, or which depends upon it, Credit, be lessen'd, the Value of every thing else must proportionably be lessen'd : the Produce of our Land must be sold at a less Price, the Tenant's Rent must then be lower'd, and the Landlord's Income diminish'd; Interest must increase, and consequently Land sell at less Years Purchase : so that all Landed-Men, in any degree indebted, after payment of Taxes and Poors-Rates, will hardly have Money to pay their Interest; and if they attempt (which is the wisest thing they can do) to sell to clear the Incumbrance, they must sell perhaps at Fifteen Years Purchase, or less, instead of Twenty-five, and will have little left for the necessary Maintenance of themselves and Families. A Tax of Two Shillings in the Pound will then sit heavier, than formerly a Tax of Four has done. The Excises will be the same, when the whole Tax shall still lie on what will not sell for above half the former Value. The Proprietor of the Funds may perhaps look with a dry Eye on the miserable Condition of the Country-Gentleman and Farmer, and like a hard Landlord expect to be paid the uttermost Farthing; but will soon find himself involv'd in the same Calamity. His Rents will come in poorly, tho he has every Penny, the Funds appropriated to him produce, paid justly without abatement. Customs must fail as Trade fails; and Moneys arising from foreign Importations, which are a great part of his Dependence, must vastly less-

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sen, as a general Poverty increaseth. He will be in the same Case as the Landed-Man. If he is dispos'd to sell, there will not be found a Purchaser to give him a tolerable Price; and if his Luxury prompts him rather to borrow, than lessen his way of living, griping Usury will soon devour him. He may indeed say, the Nation is mortgag'd to me, and they must raise new Taxes; whoever suffers, I will not. Can any Man in such Circumstances as I have mention'd, have the Folly to imagine, that Nine Parts in Ten of the People of *England* shall be miserable to eternity, that he, and those who claim under him, may live at ease, preying on the rest of the Nation? Far be such a Thought from any honest or sober Head.

I hope these things will be weigh'd by Landed and Funded Men in some degree. I dare say, our wise Legislature will consider our present Condition, and the Consequences of it, with that Justice and Prudence which becomes a *British* Government. And I hope every *Englishman* will be ready heartily to join with those prudent Methods which by our Governors shall be pitch'd upon for our Relief; and will not grudge at some present Inconvenience, to secure themselves and Posterity from Ruin, to preserve a Noble Constitution and a Free People from being torn to pieces; and whatever false Steps have hitherto been taken, will honestly and earnestly set about so important a Business. More true Honour and lasting Satisfaction will by this means be acquir'd, than
all

all the Heaps of Riches got by Tricks and Deceit, can give to the Possessors of them, even supposing their Minds to be as harden'd as their Conduct has been. What nobler Scene can lie before a great King, or a wise Patriot, than the view of saving his Country? This will be true Honour, and remotest Posterity will bless the Memory of the Man who shall accomplish this Work.

I shall now, with a hearty Good-will to my Country, and due Submission to those whose proper Business it is to remedy National Evils, propose in general the Method I conceive proper for our present Case. I hope my Reader will not give it the Name of a Scheme; for such generally promise great things, without giving any body the least Trouble or Inconvenience. How many People have we who have Schemes, as they call them, to pay the Nation's Debts without Money? After the Account I have given of our Condition at present, and the Prospect that lies before us, no body I believe will expect such a Scheme from me, or that so malignant a Disease should be cur'd with Sugar-Plumbs or Pearl Cordials. The Remedies must be strong and powerful, equal to the Case, and not Opiates that will lull the Disease, and make the Patient quiet, till he drops into his Coffin.

The two principal things to be aim'd at, are the Security of the Payment of our National Debt, and the Security of our National Commerce. These are both the concern of every

Englishman,

Englishman, his Happiness and Property depend upon them, and consequently every one ought in Duty and Interest to do somewhat towards this great Work.

By what has been said before, I hope it is sufficiently apparent, that the way to increase our Commerce, the only Source of our Riches, is to diminish our Debt. If our Debt be diminish'd by any unjust or unreasonable Methods, such as paying it all at once in Paper, (the Scheme of a certain godly Knight) I say, if such Methods be taken, our Credit and Faith must be wholly destroy'd, and then I think Trade can flourish but poorly. If the Proprietors of the Funds are paid off in the same manner as in *France*, our Trade will be the same as theirs; which see in *Castaign's* and *Freke's* Papers: *Exchange* with *Paris* and *Bordeaux* nothing: So will it in such a Scheme be with *London*, *Bristol*, &c. no Foreigner will give us credit for a Penny. The publick Faith must therefore be kept inviolable; and if any Alterations are made even in the Mode or Circumstances of Payment, different from those chalk'd out in our Acts of Parliament; such Alterations must not, nor ought to be made, without evident and necessary Reasons, apparent to every reasonable Man, and if possible with the Consent of the Parties concern'd; at least in such a manner that they shall be secure of bettering their Condition by such Alteration. No one will I hope think that it is Breach of Faith or Honour in any Nation to

mend the Condition of their Creditors, tho some of them should be so froward as to prefer their own Ruin and that of their Country, in the old way, to the saving of both in a new one. Every Session of Parliament produces some new Laws, which are always an Alteration of our former Condition, and do restrain or enlarge our Liberty and Property. It is for this very purpose that Government is instituted, and every Country has an absolute Power vested in one or more for the Preservation of the whole. While this absolute Power keeps within the Essential Bounds of Justice, and consults the Good of the Community, that Government is a Free one, tho the Power be vested in a Despotick Monarch. If these Rules be transgress'd, it is an arbitrary and tyrannical Government, tho the Model of it were the most perfect Republick.

The next Principle I shall lay down, is, That in a National Case, every Part of that Nation ought to contribute some way or other to the Preservation of the Whole : as the Whole ought not to suffer Ruin for some private Mens Advantage, so ought no one Part or Body of the Nation to be ruin'd in order to save harmless another Part or Body of the Nation. Indeed, in cases of extreme Danger, nothing must come in competition with the general Safety ; but in Times of Peace and Quietness, while there is an Opportunity of preventing extreme Danger, it ought to be done

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in such a manner as may prove the least detrimental; and if any Loss must happen, it should be distributed as equally as is possible, or consistent with Justice and Compact. The following Proposal will, I think, very well consist with these Principles. The Objections that may be made against it, I hope to give a full Answer to, and shew, That if other Obstacles do not hinder the Execution, the Principles of Justice, Prudence, or good Policy, will not oppose it.

The Funds I propose to pay the National Debt, are,

1. The present Funds appropriated to that Use; which I, for the sake of round Numbers, compute at Three Millions *per Annum*. I believe it will appear that in 1719, they brought in near that Sum, and might be made so much by some prudent Regulations: but what they shall fall short of that Sum, may by those who know their true Produce be struck off from this Proposal, unless the Deficiency can be made good for some time by the Savings already made for three Years past, which some Persons have given out to be very considerable.

2. The Overplus which an Equal Land-Tax of Three Shillings in the Pound shall produce, over and above what the present Land-Tax at that Rate produces, which I compute will amount to One Million *per Annum*. (That an Equal Land-Tax is no impracticable *Chimera*, I hope to shew.)

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3. The

3. The Money the *South-Sea* Company are to pay the Government for their Contract, which is 4m156,306 at *Christmas* 1721, and 3m031,375 at *Christmas* 1722.

4. That the first Year *Two Millions* of *Exchequer Bills* be issu'd to be circulated by all the Revenues, and paid on demand at the *Exchequer*, or other convenient Place; such Bills to carry no Interest, that they may not be lock'd up, as has been the case of former *Exchequer Bills* and *Bank Notes*, carrying no Interest issu'd in their stead. If this be found practicable the first Year, as I doubt not it will, that *Two Millions* more be issu'd the second Year, to be circulated in the same manner.

Let us now see what Effect this will have in lessening our Debt, which I suppose to be about Fifty Millions, and the Interest of it at a Medium Five *per Cent*.

The

The Debt supposed Fifty Millions, the Interest supposed to be Five *per Cent.* amounts for one Year } 52m500,000
to 2m500,000

The *South-Sea* Company are to pay at *Christmas* 1721. for the Redeemables, 4m156,306, which } 4m000,000
for the sake of round Numbers, I will call only

The present Funds appropriated to the Payment of } 3m000,000
the Debt

The Overplus of an Equal Land-Tax supposed to be 1m000,000
Exchequer Bills to be issu'd the first Year 2m000,000

Total sunk 10m000,000

Which reduces the Debt at *Christmas* 1721, to 42m500,000
Interest on the same for one Year to *Christmas* } 2m125,000
1722, at Five *per Cent.* is

44m625,000

The *South-Sea* Company are to pay at *Christmas* } 2m927,286
1722, for the long Annuities subscrib'd to them

And for those not subscribed 0m114,089

The Funds as above 3m000,000

The Land-Tax as above 1m000,000

Exchequer-Bills to be issu'd the second Year 2m000,000

Total, not reckoning the odd 100 Pounds 9m041,000

Which reduces the Debt of 44m625,000 at *Christ-* } 35m584,000
mas 1722, to

Interest on the same to *Christmas* 1723. 1m779,200

37m363,200

To discharge which the present Funds Three Million } 4m000,000
and Land-Tax One Million

Which reduces the Debt at *Christmas* 1723, to 33m363,200

Interest on the same to *Christmas* 1724, is 1m668,160

35m031,360

The sinking Fund, as above, 4m000,000

Which reduces the Debt at *Christmas* 1724, to 31m031,360

To which add Four Millions Exchequer-Bills, and the } 35m031,360
Debt is

When

When the Debt is reduced to this degree, One Shilling in the Pound of the Land-Tax may immediately be dropt, and some of the most grievous Duties on Trade taken off ; and the rest of the Duties will reduce the Debt by small degrees till the Year 1727, when the Interest of the *South-Sea* being reduced to Four *per Cent.* will in a reasonable time enable the Nation to clear the whole Debt. The Nation need not, when the Debt is reduced to Thirty-five Millions, press the Proprietors of the Funds with too speedy a payment, but may give them some time to enjoy their Interest, which will not then be inconsistent with the publick Welfare.

Some may perhaps think that such a speedy lessening the publick Debt will be an Injury to them. If the Legislature is of their Mind, the Debt may be sunk a Million a Year less than I propose ; and upon that foot there will be less Difficulty on account of any Deficiencies there may be in the Funds I have propos'd. But I cannot but think it is better for the Proprietors of the Funds to have the Debt less'n'd as much as may be ; and I am fully satisfy'd that it is best for the Kingdom in general.

Having shewn what effect this will have in reducing the national Debt ; I shall, before I answer the Objections likely to be rais'd, shew the Benefit arising from such a Proposal.

1. It will turn the Balance immediately between the Quantity of Credit and the Stocks

to be purchased with it : Twelve or Fourteen Millions reduced in the real Quantity of Stocks, and so much Money as Four Millions thrown in fresh on the Market, will make a vast alteration ; the Commodity being so much diminished, and the Money to buy it with increased. The effects of this Change will be found daily increasing, and one may hope again to see Merchants and Gentlemen able to borrow Money at Five *per Cent.* if not at Four. If the national Debt should by any Scheme or Proposal be kept up without diminution, it would soon get the Balance of the national Fund to pay it, and then the Redemption would be impossible ; and the circulating this Debt doubled in Stocks employing such vast Sums, which I have shewn to be ruinous to Trade, the Customs must of course lessen, and consequently the Funds for payment must be reduced, and the Debt annually increased, which will soon put the Proprietors in fear of not seeing even their Principal paid. This is the effect of neglecting the speedy payment ; but if that be attempted, the quite contrary will happen, our Trade will again flourish, and the Proprietors of the Debt will soon see both Principal and Interest paid them.

2. It will advance the Value of the Stocks, and enable the Proprietors to sell at better Prices. It's possible that in another way, *viz.* by throwing the whole Credit of the Legislature, and some real Money into their Stocks, to raise them, they might perhaps for one piece of
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of a Year sell at a high Price, and enable some of those that have been Fools this Year to act a wise part the next; sell out at a high Price, and find other honest, but weak People, to stand in their place. But this will only bring a second Destruction upon us, infinitely worse than the present. No Nation can bear two such Shocks; and there is no question the same Game will be plaid over again; but with this difference, that before no body expected that the Founders of the Scheme would blow it up so suddenly, but now every body is prepared for it; and the only view of every sensible Proprietor, is to play just the same part as the directing Managers have done before, *viz.* sell out, and the Devil take the hindmost. This, even to the most abandon'd Men, who would willingly ruin their Neighbours, is but a wretched Scheme; their Intention must take vent; every body reasons the same way; and it is a fundamental Maxim in Stock-Jobbing, that when great numbers have the same view, no Benefit can be made. So that they have but a sorry chance this way of repairing or mending their past Fortune. But if the contrary View prevails, and the Legislature heartily set about paying honestly the Debt, the publick Credit will be establish'd, even beyond suspicion; Money will be plenty, and Stocks be dear, People being sure of Five *per Cent.* from the Government, and a probable view of a much better Dividend from their Companies, and a Security of seeing their Principal and Interest.

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3. Which I reckon the principal Advantage to the Nation in general, the Landed-Man will continue his Rents, if not increase them, and the Trader will be able to carry on his Commerce to advantage. I have above, I think, made out fully, that keeping up the whole national Debt without diminution, must employ so great a part of our Money and Credit, as not to leave sufficient for the Purposes of Inland Payments or Foreign Commerce. If the Stocks be push'd up a second time, and fall a second time, which is as natural a Consequence as the descent of Water when rais'd, a second Ruin will follow, which will destroy all the little Confidence left, will annul all our Credit, and reduce us to live upon hard Money, which will neither pay Rents nor any thing else at the rate they now bear: But if the Debts are in any measure paid off, Land and Trade will again be the Favourites, and People forc'd into both for a comfortable Subsistence; which must raise the Value of both, and make those People useful to the Nation who now live on the Nation, and neither add Strength nor Riches to it, but on the contrary are its Weakness and Poverty.

4. We shall by this means be able to support ourselves against foreign Enemies. What Horror must it strike into every true *Briton*, to think of a Debt of Fifty, Sixty, or Seventy Millions, a loss of Trade and Credit, accompany'd with a destructive War, or foreign Invasion? If we look back on the whole History

of our Nation, we shall find that we have never long been free from these Calamities ; the last thirty Years have been almost one continued War. We have indeed since the Peace of *Utrecht* had the Name of Peace, but have really been at War at a safe and convenient distance. I can see no foundation in the posture of foreign Affairs, to give us hopes of any long continuance in our present Tranquillity. Will not then common Prudence dictate this to us, that we should, like the Ant, provide against Winter ? Would any honest Man run the hazard of breaking our publick Faith ? Would the Proprietors of the Debts stand the Venture ? Would not raising the Expence of a War, over and above our present Taxes, endanger even a War at home ? And would not uneasy ruin'd Men, desperate and enrag'd, sell and betray their Country ? The Prospect is so dreadful, that one would wonder People were not rous'd from the Thoughts of their little pitiful Gain, to think of saving every thing that is dear to them, their Religion, Liberty, and Property.

The Objections against this or any other Proposal for the Relief of the Publick, are of two sorts : They are made either as to the Practicableness of it, or the Justice and Expediency. As to the Proposal being practicable, it may be objected, That the Substance of it is to rise out of an Equal Land-Tax, which is not to be obtained. In answer to this Objection, I need only shew, that it is to be obtained,

tain'd, if those whose Interest it is to procure it, will do what they can towards it. That it is the Interest of every Landed Man in *England* to see the National Debt at least reduc'd, if not totally paid, I think what I have said before has fully made out. If the Debt cannot be discharg'd without such a Fund, as certainly it cannot in any tolerable time, it is the Interest of all Landed Men to contribute towards it, rather than bear the Mischiefs which will otherwise ensue. I agree it is the Interest of one Part of the Nation, that the other Part should raise the Money, and they be excus'd, and that if they have Numbers sufficient, they will perhaps excuse themselves: but, upon Examination, I believe it will appear, that the Balance of Interest in our Legislature (if one may be allow'd to suppose, that Interest can influence a Legislature) is very small, and that in the Method other Affairs have been carry'd on, this may with Ease be accomplished.

But supposing at present, that Gentlemen are not satisfy'd the Necessity is so great, as I have endeavour'd to prove it is; yet, considering how many of the House of Commons are Members for Places remote, where they have no Estates, and that the Estates they have do at present pay the full Tax, nothing can hinder such Gentlemen from doing Justice to themselves, and Service to the Nation, which laying such a Tax as the *Land-Tax* equally certainly is. But supposing a Number of Twenty or Thirty Majority are of a different Mind, I

cannot imagine, considering the Nature of the Case, but Reasons may easily be given, that will induce such a Number not to be obstinate in a clear Case, that will certainly in the End be even for their Interest. The Payment of such a Tax will turn the Balance so soon, that I dare say every Landed Man will find his Taxes double paid the first or second Year in the ready Payment or Increase of his Rent, and the Rise of the Value of his Land to be fold. If the Proposal I have made, of which this Article is certainly the most difficult, be in any tolerable degree pursu'd, the Landed Man may be assured he shall not pay Three Shillings above four Years, Two Shillings for three or four Years after, and then the *Land-Tax* of One Shilling will be more than sufficient to answer all the Purposes in Times of Peace. What may contribute very fully to satisfy him this shall be his Case, and which will very much advance the Reduction of the Debt, is this, That when the Value of every Gentleman's yearly Rent shall be truly stated, any one that pleases may be at liberty to purchase from the Publick an Exemption from his Tax for four Years next ensuing, upon payment of the Value for three Years after the rate of Three Shillings down. This will be a full Assurance, that they shall pay nothing the fourth Year: and if others should pay Three Shillings that Year, it will be Interest for the Money paid down, after the rate of Eight *per Cent. per annum*, which is Inducement enough to any Landed Man
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who has Money to advance it, and those who have not, to borrow it at Five *per Cent.* which will certainly be again the common Interest, when it is seen our Debts will be in a way of speedy Payment. I would add this further, that an Occasion might be taken from hence to lessen the Rancour of the Disaffected Popish Gentlemen, they are now liable to pay double Taxes, tho in fact they do it no where; yet the Law enrages them as much, while it is useless, as if it were put in practice. I would humbly propose, that even they may on payment of the full Tax of Three Shillings in the Pound for four Years next ensuing, be exempted from being liable to pay double Taxes; this would take away the Ground of their Complaint, that they are ill us'd in Civil Matters for religious and speculative Opinions: their Land being now, it is to be presum'd, fairly register'd, must be a great Inducement to them to comply with such an indulgent Offer from the Legislature.

To the executing this Part of the Proposal, it would be necessary to have a general Register of all Lands, that are rented, at the true Rent, under a severe Penalty for making a false or defective Register: those that are in hand to be view'd and tax'd by Commissioners at the Price they shall judge them worth, and not to be discharged but on the Oath of the Owner, and a certain Number of Freeholders in his Neighbourhood, that they are not worth to be lett so much Money as assess'd at, and in that

that Case the Assessment to be abated. But I shall spend no more time upon this Subject, till I see some likelihood of its being attempted. I shall only add, that were such an equal Tax not necessary to paying the Publick Debt; yet the Justice of it would be the strongest Motive to lay it equal, were the Tax but One Shilling in the Pound. Those who have not for thirty Years past paid their Share, have manifestly injured the rest of the Nation, who ought some time or other to have Justice done them. No Occasion can call for it better than the present, when it may be the means of saving us from much greater Calamities than paying Nine Shillings in three Years out of our Rents. Tho my greatest Interest be in Land, I would gladly part with a fifth Part of it, to see the National Debt clear'd, and the Calamities of my Country heal'd, and should think I never made a wiser Bargain: I say this upon a supposition of a just and prudent Application of the Publick Money; for if that be not secur'd, I have neither Heart myself, nor can advise any other Man to sacrifice any part of his Property, only to put us in a worse Condition, instead of mending our present.

A second Objection, as to the Practicableness of paying the Debts, is, That they are by Agreement not payable till a certain limited Time. This I admit to be true, as to the One Million Six Hundred Thousand Pounds due to the *Bank*, and the Three Millions Two Hundred Thousand Pounds due to the *India Company*.

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As for the *South-Sea* Company, they are payable immediately, as far as the sinking Fund will go. They must admit that their Seven Millions is part of that sinking Fund ; and so far as that and the old sinking Fund will go, they are certainly redeemable ; and to say that the Legislature may not increase that sinking Fund by any new Tax, is neither reasonable, nor has it a foundation in their Act. I admit that the Government cannot, by their Agreement, take in new People to pay off and purchase their Stock at a less Interest. This would not be just, they having agreed to give Seven Millions to the Publick : But I know no Obstacle to raising Taxes, or circulating Exchequer-Bills towards paying them.

3. Another Objection may be against the practicableness of circulating Four Millions Exchequer-Bills that do not carry Interest.

The Circulation the *Bank of England* make at this time of much more, will in a great degree answer this Objection. Why should not the Government, upon a standing Revenue of at least Five Millions a Year, be able to circulate such a Sum ? The want of Specie-Notes is now so great, that the Publick would gladly see their number increased, especially since the greatest part of the Bankers have lost their Credit. Private Men might in such Notes be able to keep their Cash in their own possession ; and it's very hard if the whole Revenue of *England* cannot do as much as three or four Bankers have done within this Twelvemonth.

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Could there be a Run upon the Exchequer, which I think is impossible, yet no Man of common Sense would join in it, knowing that the whole Revenue of the Publick was his Security. And as to the Demands of the Bank, one would desire them to give no more Credit to the Government-Notes, than the Government does to theirs, *viz.* That the Government receive Bank-Notes in all Payments into the Revenue, and the Bank receive the Exchequer-Notes as Money in all Payments into them, and that each be at liberty to demand of the other what is due to them: If the Bank bring Exchequer-Notes to the Government, that they be paid the Value in their own Notes lying in the Exchequer, so far as they will go, and the rest in Money; and that the Exchequer draw on the Bank in the same manner. If the Bank should chuse, as I dare say they will not, to give no Credit to the Exchequer-Notes, the Government need not give Credit to theirs: but these are Cases no reasonable Man will suppose. The want of Specie-Notes is now so great, that the Bank need not fear a demand for more than they care to circulate. Tho the Government should issue a number of Exchequer-Notes, this will not encroach on the Bank; and if it does on the Bankers Trade, it's for the publick Service it should, that People might not lose their Money by trusting those who game in Stocks at the hazard of the honest Lender. It may be said, the Publick are under an Agreement to pay

pay the Revenue weekly to the several Companies, and cannot keep their Money to circulate these Bills. This is a trifling Objection. If the Government pay them these Bills which are payable on demand, it is paying them Money as much as the present way of paying them in Bank-Notes. If the Government pay duly, according to their Contract, who can object to their keeping Cash in their hands? The Companies, I dare say, will not demand Money of the Exchequer in large Sums; and when they have paid out the Exchequer-Bills to their Proprietors, any of them may demand his Money as soon as he pleases. A forc'd Credit to Paper is ridiculous as well as impracticable; and to talk of it for such a Sum as Sir H—— M——— does, would make one think he had liv'd in the World a great while to little purpose.

I shall not abuse my Reader, in spending his Time to confute such a *Chimera*, which none but a mere Visionary can fall into. It is a Scheme destructive of all the Parliamentary Engagements; a Scheme that will enable every Debtor to cheat his Creditor, as it has done in *France*. It is contrary to all the Principles of Trade and Credit, and must ruin every Country, as it has done *France* at this time. To give *Glory to God* for such a *Pick-Pocket* Discovery, as a late Author has done, is monstrous.

I shall not enlarge on this Subject of Exchequer-Bills, which deserves, and I dare say will

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have, a thorow Examination in the proper place. I shall only add, That to give Interest on them, will occasion their being lock'd up, and their place supplied by other Notes that carry no Interest; and that increasing the number to Five or Six Millions, as some People propose, is not necessary, and may be inconvenient.

I shall now consider the Objections that may be offer'd as to the Justice or Expediency of the Proposal.

1. It will be said it is neither just nor politick to deprive the Proprietors of the Stock and Subscriptions, of the Opportuniry of repairing their Fortunes, and in some measure retrieving the Losses of the last three Months. Could this be done in a way safe to the Nation, not ruinous to any new Proprietors; or could it be so manag'd that the Loss should be more equally distributed than it is at present, and should fall light and by degrees, so that every one should bear some proportion of it, and none be oppress'd with it: Could a Scheme of this kind be contriv'd, I should not be against it, considering the dreadful Havock that has been made already; tho I cannot think it perfectly agreeable to the Rules of Justice and Religion to take in new Partners to bear a part of the Loss of the old ones. But not to insist upon Scruples of Conscience, which are much out of date in these Days; I think it impossible, by any Politicks, to manage such a Scheme as will distribute the Loss in any equal

or reasonable degree as to private People. As for distributing the Loss and Gain in some proportion between the several Branches of the *South-Sea* Scheme, the Legislative Power can, if they think fit, easily settle it: but that is not a Relief to the great Losers, who have nothing but a second Game to trust to. We will suppose all proper Methods taken to raise Stock, as supplying the Market with Money, giving out Reports it will be at a high Price, every Man advising his Neighbour to buy, and all the other ways that have been lately practis'd, or can now be thought of: All this will not do; feeling will make Men wiser. A Fish that has been wounded by the Hook, will not immediately seize on the same Bait. The very Objection I am answering, supposes those who are at present Losers, which are three parts in four of the Proprietors, to take in some degree the advantage of selling out at a Price above the intrinsic Value; and that they shall find Buyers, who will again sell at a moderate Loss to others. This is a Scheme founded on the Supposition of a Majority selling as the Stock rises: and yet daily Experience has taught us, that a considerable number selling will fall the Market. The present fall from Eight Hundred to Two Hundred has been the effect of not near a tenth part of the Proprietors selling out; and shall we after this suppose that half of the Proprietors may sell out, and not make a 2d Downfall? The first was gradual, occasion'd by Peoples strong Hopes and

Resolution to be rich. They reason'd in this manner : That the Directors must keep Stock up at Eight Hundred, or else they would lose the benefit of the two last Subscriptions ; and the Consequence that was drawn, was, That the *Directors would* keep it up at that Price, and that they *could* do it, was a *Postulatum*, or taken for granted ; tho the truth was, they neither could, nor did they use any Endeavours to do it.

When Stock came to about Six Hundred, the Bank were then to support it ; and it was given out confidently they were agreed with the *South-Sea*, and this by Men of Authority, who ought not to have taken so mean a Method as propagating Lyes, to keep the Stock up for a day or two. However, this Lye had such an effect, that many, even of the most wary, did then buy in, and the Stock declin'd by easy degrees about Fifty Pound a day. Had it not been for this single Story, it had perhaps gone at once to the present Price. The Bank, however, did not come in till it was down at near Two Hundred ; and whether they are now come in *bona fide*, and without Conditions, Time will shew.

I only mention these things fresh in every body's Memory, to shew, that the last Down-fall has been as gradual as possible, People still depending, at least nine parts in ten of the Proprietors, that things would mend every day. But one cannot hope for such a strong Faith a second time. So that were it possible to give
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it a second considerable Rise, the Fall, whenever it begun, would be precipitate, and all the Stories vented, whether true or false, would not engage Persons to stand it till it comes to what they conceive the real Value; and what that is, I believe few know.

I am so fully persuaded of the Impossibility of raising Stocks to any great height, that I shall add nothing to dissuade from it, tho such Rise would be very detrimental to the Publick. Let every one that is dispos'd to raise it, try what he can do; let the Companies unite their Strength; let even the Legislature give it all the kind Assistancess possible, except giving up the publick Treasure, or taxing the People to pay the present losing Gamesters: Let all this be done, it will not be sufficient to give People a second Opportunity of saving or getting any great matters. Could some Millions of Money be thrown into this Gulph, they would soon be devour'd. There are hands more than enough to lay hold of the first Opportunity of taking out their Share at a high Price.

But admitting that it might be rais'd a second time considerably; for to raise it, and keep it at Fifty *per Cent.* above the real Value, is as practicable now as it has been formerly: but what is propos'd by most People, is raising it at least double. This, I say, is not for the Benefit of the Proprietors, taking them all together. Nothing can be called a Benefit to a Body of Men, that is not so at least to a Majority. What is a Prejudice to a
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great Majority, and a Benefit only to some few, is certainly prejudicial to that Body.

Suppose this Case, that twenty Men have equal Shares in a Stock of Two Thousand Pounds; that two of these twenty are the Managers of it; that two more are sharp cunning Fellows, who have good Intelligence, and are in the Managers Secrets. Suppose the rest of the Company all honest Men, of small Abilities, and no Intelligence; and suppose that this Stock is capable of being bought and sold at double the Value, or at half the Value, as Accidents shall happen, or as the Managers shall conduct it. It's plain, in such a Case, that the two Managers, who know the working of the Scheme, who are themselves the principal Wheels that move it, will in all Events be on the safest and surest side; and if any Gain be made, will make it; if any Loss happen, will avoid it. Their two Friends who have the favour of their Intelligence, will come off next best; and the other sixteen Proprietors have nothing for it but mere Chance or good Luck. Some unforeseen Accident may possibly favour some of them; but it's odds always against them, that they do not act for the best. Would any sensible Man play at such a Game? Is it not plainly the Interest of these sixteen Proprietors, to be contented with their Hundred Pound a-piece, and any moderate Profit arising from it, instead of gaming at odds with Sharpers, who know the Game better

ter, and can put false Dice on them whenever they please?

But not to put Cases, which perhaps are not applicable to this Affair, and these Times, I would beg the favour of my Brethren in *South-Sea Stock* (for I am a Fellow-Sufferer) to shew me, what more there is to divide amongst us, than the Publick are to pay us, (for as for our Trade, that is not redeemable, we and our Successors are to have that for ever) if this be the Case, I appeal to every honest Man, whether it be not on the whole better for each to take his own in a quiet way, or for us all to play for it. Were we all on an equal Foot, and all Lovers of Play, there would be somewhat in it; but most of us have People wiser than ourselves to cope with. I do not in the least wonder to see some Men of a superiour Genius and Interest willing to venture Chances, that in all probability will favour them; but, that honest well-meaning People, who were never let into Secrets but to their Hurt, that they should venture a second time on the same Lay they have done the first, is unaccountable.

The last Objection I shall mention, is, That paying off the National Debt will be a great Damage, not only to Widows and Orphans, but to rich Citizens, great Courtiers, and fine Ladies. One would not imagine, that People should openly object against paying the National Debt, did one not daily meet with those who strenuously oppose it, and are so barefac'd as to own, that they would willingly always have

have the Nation in Mortgage to them; it's so pretty and easy a way of Living to have full Interest without any Tax or Abatement whatsoever, that they cannot bear to think of being put into a new Channel, and made useful Members of the Publick. As for the Widows and Fatherless, who live at ease in this way, they ought to consider how many Widows and Orphans there are in the Country who would willingly get a comfortable Subsistence by the Labour of their Hands, were it but a *Groat* a Day, and yet cannot find Employment in our Manufactures, but are forced to live in the most distressed Poverty, much worse than our common Beggars; and this occasioned more by the great Quantity and great Price of our Stocks, and the extravagant Consumption of foreign Commodities by the Owners of them, than by all other Causes put together. Is there such a prodigious Distance between one poor Mortal and another, that hundreds must live miserable for the Ease of two or three of the same Species, not a whit superior in either Body or Mind, and very often inferior, if consider'd, as Members of the Publick?

As to the Case of rich Citizens and Courtiers; it is indeed very compassionate, and highly deserves Commiseration, to reduce them to live upon what they have got by their honest Labours, without being able to make above Five *per Cent.* is very hard, and must nearly affect them in their dearest Interests.

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As for fine Ladies (for whom I have the greatest Respect) I can only wish them this further Accomplishment added to all their Charms, that they may become good Women and good Wives: they are of late grown so prodigiously fine, that an honest Gentleman, who admires them, knows not how to go to the Price of them; by that time he has cast up the Account for the first Year, he is in danger of being out of Pocket. How many of our young Gentlemen live in a manner uselefs, and neglect that first Law and Blessing of Nature, *increase and multiply*! If our present Set of fine Ladies would enquire after the History of their Great Grandmothers, they would find that a Fortune of One Thousand or Two Thousand Pounds would marry them to the best Gentlemens Families, where they liv'd easy and happy, and were a Blessing to their Country. This may be the Case again, when the Nation is return'd into the right Channel; and beautiful Women shall neither by their own Folly, nor the Humour of the Times, be oblig'd to live the Life of Nuns. I shall say no more in answer to this Objection, which a Year ago nobody would have had the Face to make: but for two Months last past Interest and Reason have been convertible Terms, and People have not been asham'd to insist on this scandalous Objection; for so I must call it, it being founded on Principles diametrically opposite to the Publick Happiness.

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After considering our present Case with regard to the Nation in general, and the Publick Interest, I shall not say much as to the Interest of private Men ; such Scenes as we have been acting in, can never go over without dreadful Havock in private Mens Fortunes ; the many calamitous Cases that one knows, and hears of every hour, must deeply affect every one that has any degree of Humanity. Could the Legislature, consistently with the Publick Welfare, and the Security of the present Age, and of Posterity, relieve, I dare say the Sufferers would meet with all the Indulgence possible ; but the Management of some Men has put it out of the Power of the wisest Counsels in the World to remedy the Evil entirely, nor indeed can it be remedy'd at all, without breaking in upon our present Laws, which were not calculated for the Redress of such enormous Grievances as these are ; our Ancestors had no Notion of the Possibility of such a Case as this is, and acted like the *Romans*, who for many Ages had no Law to punish *Parricide* ; it never entering into their Minds, that any could be guilty of so villanous a Crime. The *Romans* had a Law, that where a Bargain was made for three times the Value of the thing purchas'd, that Contract should of course be reckon'd fraudulent, and avoided ; and some of our greatest Presidents in our Courts of Equity have wish'd the Law of *England* were the same. Such a Law is certainly agreeable to all the Principles of Reason and Conscience ; and were there no other Ingredients in our present

sent Case, would be a good Foundation for Relief of many in great Distress: but in the Case of *South-Sea* Contracts, Hazard and Chance is part of the Consideration, and the Value the Parties set on that not being to be known, it cannot appear, that the Contracts at the time of making them were excessive. If this playing at Chance could be brought under the same Consideration as gaming, our Laws are already plain in that particular, that gaming Debts are not recoverable. Whoever reads the Act of Parliament for the *South-Sea* of last Sessions, will find no Colour for any such Method as Subscriptions; nor was that Method so much as thought of, when the Act pass'd. It certainly deserves very little Encouragement from the Legislature, being the most ensnaring way imaginable to draw innocent People into their Ruin: the Bait of dealing greatly for little Sums was irresistible, so that did not the whole of the *South-Sea* depend upon this Article, I should think it might as justly be discountenanc'd, as the same Method of Proceeding was in other Companies: but I fear, as things stand, it will be impracticable totally to dissolve all Agreements made for Subscriptions and Stock, without in some Cases ruining honest Men, who have us'd all their Prudence to keep themselves safe. The utmost I can think of as a Relief to a vast Number of People, which would be a real Injury to but very few, would be to discharge all Contracts for Subscriptions, upon which no Part of the Money is paid; and as

for those where part of the Money is paid, to leave the Seller at his Liberty, either to refund the Money to the Buyer, or else to deliver to him the Subscription contracted for, without demanding any more Money : As for instance, where the third Subscription has been contracted for at Three hundred Premium, of which One hundred or One hundred and fifty was paid in hand, that the Seller be at liberty either to retain the Money so paid, and deliver the Receipt to the Buyer, or if he thinks it more for his advantage, retain the Receipt, and pay back the Money. This seems to be so agreeable to Reason and Conscience, that many of the chief Managers have of their own accord acted upon this Principle, and have refunded great Sums they had actually receiv'd. Whether this proceeded from Compunction of Conscience, and Fear of something else, or from a true Principle of Honour and Justice, I will not say ; but the Action is certainly commendable.

As to Relief in Contracts for Stock ; if all Bargains were to be avoided, it would often fall very hard on the Person who ought least to suffer, that is, he who has acted with most Prudence. It is a Rule in our Courts of Equity, and a very just one, that he who trusts most shall be cheated, that is, that the Man who acts prudently, and avoids Hazards, shall be prefer'd to the Man who chuses to run them. But as the present Case is certainly out of all former Rules, I cannot but think every one who has
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made Bargains, and is not a Loser, may be very well contented, tho he come off but a small Gainer. If all Contracts for Delivery of Stock not executed, were order'd to be executed at the Price the Stock bore at the time of the Contract made, I think the Seller could not suffer: as for instance, one that has bought at Seven Hundred, when Stock comes to Eight Hundred, agrees to sell for Eleven Hundred at *Christmas*; if the Buyer were to take the Stock now at Eight Hundred, the Price at the time of his Contract made, he would be severely punish'd for his running Hazards, tho perhaps not ruin'd, and the Seller would come off very well in being safe, and a small Gainer; the Price of Stock every Day might be easily settled. These Remedies for distress'd Persons, I think, are not inconsistent with the natural Rules of Equity in such a Case; and tho our Laws may be to the contrary, the Legislative Power can consider this Case as a new one, as of vast Consequence to the Peace and Quiet of the People, and can and will make such Alterations, as they shall judge necessary for the general Good. No Man has a greater regard for our Laws than myself; and the Law taking its Course, has hitherto been for the Publick Good, whatever some private Men may have suffer'd by it. But I think every one will allow, we have been in a sort of a lawless State for some Months this Year. The greatest Enemy of our happy Government will not lay to the Charge of our Legislature any part of the unreasonable Execution

Execution of the *South-Sea Scheme*. Whoever reads the Act of Parliament, and compares it with the Directors Management, will find them as contrary to each other, as a just and prudent Scheme, and an unjust and foolish one can be. We can hardly say we have been acting under a Law, but have rather been in *Hobbes's State of Nature* for some time, and are now returning to the *State of Society*. To inforce to the utmost all the mad Actions and Agreements we have made with one another in our *delirious State*, does not seem necessary to a just Administration.

In the approaching Sessions this Matter will, no doubt, be consider'd, and what is upon the whole best for the Publick, done. The Parliament will consider whether the throwing vast numbers of People into Prisons will not endanger a more general Bankruptcy of all sorts of Traders, and a dreadful fall in the Price of the Stocks; and will weigh this Mischief against the other, of interrupting the Course of legal Proceedings. This I think every one will agree with me in, That if it shall appear that any Set of Men have by virtue of the Trust repos'd in them, taken occasion to deceive and cheat their Fellow-Subjects, such Persons are neither by the Law of Justice, nor our present Laws, entitled to any Remedy to recover immense Sums from innocent and deluded Persons.

I cannot conclude this Subject without saying something to the Scheme of a worthy Member

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ber of the *House of Commons*, for whom every honest *Englishman* ought to have the greatest Respect; who from the beginning of this *dark* Affair, gave notice to his Countrymen of the Hazard they ran in entering into a Scheme that was calculated for certain Loss to some, and certain Gain to others. His Behaviour on this occasion has been such, that I shall always have the greatest regard for him, tho what he has lately publish'd is entirely opposite to what I propole. The short of what he hints in his last Performance, is annulling the whole Scheme, and every Act done in pursuance of it; and amongst the rest, giving up the Seven Millions, the Consideration which induc'd the Parliament to agree with the Company. To take this Money, he thinks, is participating in the unjust Gains of those he calls the Plunderers of his Country. I entirely agree with that Gentleman, that the Publick ought to give up that Money, could they by that means heal all the Wounds that have been given, and set us, in every respect, where we were before this Bargain: which is indeed saying no more than that it had been better we had never engag'd in the Scheme. But that Gentleman himself seems to despair of doing Justice to every one. Tho his Charity and Compassion be very large, it cannot extend far enough to relieve all. How will he relieve the Merchants and Traders of all sorts, who have been ruin'd, not by dealing in Stock, but by the Ruin of Credit? I will venture to say, that these Men are
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intituled to Relief preferable to any one of the *South-Sea* Dealers, who have all contributed in some way or other to their own Ruin.

The Parliament have thought fit to give Countenance, by an Act, to the *South-Sea* Scheme; I mean in general; for to charge on the Act of Parliament all the *South-Sea* Company have done, would be scandalizing our Legislature: but so far, I say, it has been countenanc'd, that the People have had reason to think they have been acting under a publick Sanction. They have indeed acted foolishly and madly, and play'd with their own and the publick Safety. They have done immense Damage to the Nation, and some to themselves. Shall they after this pretend to come off without any Loss, to have their Money again? This is not Justice in any Sense I have ever understood that Word. If there must be a Loss somewhere, as certainly there must, it ought to fall rather on the rash and imprudent Adventurer at a high Price, than on the prudent one at a low Price. Shall he that has been so weak as to give a Thousand Pound, as the third Subscribers have done, come off clear; and shall he who has given Three Hundred for the Stock, bear the Loss, and have his Three Hundred reduc'd to One? This has nothing of the Air of Justice in it, but quite the contrary. To prevent any Man's being a gainer, whether he be now in, or has sold out to great Profit, and to distribute these Gains amongst the Losers, were it practicable, would perhaps be agreeable

ble to Reason and Justice, but it is reconcilable to neither to make the wrong Men losers, to save those who by their own Agreement are to lose, if there be a Loss. I can see no way of destroying the Scheme, as that Gentleman proposes, but what must necessarily have this Effect. It will besides be very little for the Credit of the Administration to set a thing up one Year, suffer the People all to engage in it, and then destroy it the next. I have always observ'd, that People will better bear a great Loss by their own Folly, than a little one by the force or compulsion of others. To have People say that their Money is enacted out of their Pockets, will be a much more grievous Complaint, than that they have lost it by gaming with Sharpers.

As to the Justice of the Publick taking the Seven Millions, I think what the worthy Gentleman has said will not impeach it. It is by no means partaking in the Sin of private Managers. That Gentleman admits the Money might have been rais'd by a just and fair Management, injurious to none. This is what the Parliament intended should be the Scheme. Shall the Designs of the Parliament for the publick Good be avoided by the Folly or Wickedness of private Men? Shall four or five Men in any Station, be able by their Conduct to cancel a National Agreement? This would indeed be exposing the Publick, to have all they do, tho ever so wise or just, set aside by private

yate Mens Management. This would be punishing the Nation, and even Posterity, for the Faults of private Men. If there be a Fault, let it lie at the true Door. Let those who have been guilty of it, make amends for it: but let not the People of *England* be fin'd in Seven Millions they are lawfully intitled to, because ten or a dozen Men have made them lose, or done them damage to the Value of Twenty Millions.

The Times perhaps are such, that the worst Actions must be overlook'd, and pass by; but whatever be our Calamity, let us not throw away the only Anchor that is left us to trust to. To remit the Money due to the Publick, is to part with the only probable Means left to prevent the Ruin that this Year's Transactions threaten us with. It is not only depriving the Nation in general of so much Money towards paying their Debts, but is doing the greatest Injury imaginable to the Proprietors of the Funds, by putting our Affairs upon an inextricable foot.

I dare say, that worthy Gentleman is fully persuaded of the absolute necessity of speedily lessening our Debts. This is what he has been aiming at for some Years past; and without doubt has still some Method to propose for the effecting of it. I cannot imagine he will think any other practicable, that will do it so speedily, as the present Agreement for the Seven Millions. I would beg leave to put him
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in mind of what, I dare say, his Experience has taught him, That a Scheme that may be very good in Calculation, will prove very defective in Execution. A small sinking Fund, which by Mathematical Rules will pay the Nation's Debts in thirty Years, will not, as Political Affairs are manag'd, do it in fifty, and perhaps never. Whatever of this sort is attempted, must be by great Steps, that shall have so quick an effect, as will make it impossible for bad Management to hinder it. When once the Publick feels the happy Consequences of lessening their Debt, I think no Set of Men will be able to turn them off from proceeding in the same way, till we are in a safe and flourishing Condition. The other way of lessening Debts by slow Steps, will hardly ever do in private Mens Affairs, and in publick Affairs is a mere Speculation, is forgotten and abandon'd before it has any visible Effect. Had the rest of the Scheme been as justly and prudently executed, as this of gaining Seven Millions to the Publick was wisely contriv'd, I think no Act could have done more Honour, and given greater Reputation to a *British* Parliament: and I see no reason why they should alter their Minds as to this part of their Conduct. Whatever Deception there has been in other parts of the *South-Sea* Scheme, there has been none in this: Every Proprietor, small and great, knew this was part of the Bargain; and every one, till of late, readily acquiesc'd in it; and those who

now desire the Remittance of it, speak with such Diffidence, as shews they are in their Consciences convinc'd, that this may justly be demanded of them; and I dare say will readily acquiesce in the Payment of it, if the rest of their Grievances and Sufferings be redress'd by the Charity and Justice of their Representatives in Parliament. I shall not labour this Point any further with that Gentleman, because he seems only to speak of giving up the Seven Millions, in case the whole Scheme be dissolv'd, and every body set on the old Foot; but as that in all probability will not be the Case, I take it for granted, that Gentleman will not think this Part of the Bargain should be given up, when the rest of the Scheme is establish'd.

The Nation have now set before them *Good and Evil, Life and Death*, they must chuse immediately; Nature works so strongly, as to bear no Delay; our Happiness or Misery depends on the Resolutions of this Sessions of Parliament; all the Methods that have been formerly us'd to shift off the evil Day, are now at an End; we cannot any longer live from Hand to Mouth, and leave it to those who come after us to bear the Burden: how great a Happiness is it, that we are come to this long-expected *Crisis*, in the Reign of so just and wise a King, and under so good a Parliament! we may depend on their Justice and Wisdom, that what is best for us will be done. They will not sit still, and suffer our National Distempers

to gather Strength, and consume us daily; however rugged or difficult the Path may be, they will overcome all Obstacles to extricate us, and make us again a flourishing People. Nothing can hinder *England*, while its free Constitution is preserv'd, from being sooner or later a great and powerful State: we have all the Blessings Nature can bestow on a Nation; a temperate Climate, a rich Soil, great Stores of valuable Productions, vast Numbers of People, noble Manufactures of all sorts, Plenty of Shipping, and the best Ports in the World; such a Nation can never be ruin'd, but by its own Folly and Infatuation. Were it our Fate (as God be praised it is not) to be under weak and selfish Managers, with a greater Debt, and worse Projects, than we are now under; even in that Case I should not despair: The tottering Fabrick would indeed soon come to a Dissolution, a general Conflagration would involve many in the Ruin; but when that was once over, a new *Phoenix* would arise out of the Ashes of the former, young and vigorous. Were we by any sudden Calamity to lose all our present Riches, and be reduced to as great a State of Poverty, as any Country in *Europe*; our People would soon recover themselves by their Natural Produce, and their Manufactures. Nothing could ruin us effectually, but the Loss of our Liberty, or a Continuance for many Years in a languishing and consumptive Condition; this indeed would drive away our People, and with them

them our Manufactures, and we might not retrieve the Loss in a Century ; but excepting these Cases, nothing can undo us. If this be the worst of our Case under the worst Management ; how much Reason have we to expect Happiness from the best ? We have all the Reason in the World to be assured, that our Publick Faith shall be kept inviolable, tho all our Neighbour-Nations have broke theirs ; that our Debts shall be paid honourably, when our Neighbours have, by one Shift after another, cancell'd theirs. As our Government have this in their Power, no one ought to doubt of their having the Will to make us soon a happy and flourishing People.

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